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ORIGINAL  
(Red)UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION III841 Chestnut Building  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

DATE: August 8, 1989

SUBJECT: Potential Radiation Superfund Site

FROM: Thomas J. Maslany, Director  
Air Management Division (3AM00) *Tou*TO: Stephen R. Wassersug, Director  
Hazardous Waste Management Division (3HW00)

This memo is to transmit information telephoned to Bill Belanger by Jim Joyner of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in King of Prussia, PA on July 31. The call was in reference to the Safety Lite Corporation in Bloomsburg, PA. The Company is an NRC licensee which has operated since before World War II, and was in the business of making luminous signs using radioactive materials. At this point, the Company is under NRC order to clean up the property they occupy, and there are insufficient funds to do the job. It appears they are going to go bankrupt and leave behind a contaminated property. NRC wanted to inform us of the problem and requested that we investigate to see whether Superfund involvement would be appropriate.

Safety Lite Corporation occupies a 10 to 11 acre site in Bloomsburg, PA on the banks of the Susquehanna River. The early activities at the site involved manufacture of bulkhead markers used in naval vessels to mark hatchways. These glow-in-the-dark markers used radium mixed with a phosphor as the light generating material. More recently, the product was tritium-illuminated exit signs. The site is known to be contaminated with tritium, radium and americium, all of which are radioactive. Tritium is a form of hydrogen and is extremely mobile in the environment. It is very difficult to control because it tends to replace the normal hydrogen in water and in organic compounds. There is also a strong suspicion on the part of NRC that other non-radioactive solvents are present. It is not known whether there are hazardous chemicals, but these are suspected. There has been no systematic site investigation yet.

Jim Joyner is the Chief of NRC's Materials Licensing Branch and can be reached at FTS 346-5370. He can provide more of the site history and bring your staff up-to-date on what is known about the site and on the Company's financial and legal status. If you choose to conduct a site investigation, Bill Belanger will be able to assist you. I would also suggest that the NRC staff be included because the materials involved do not lend themselves to easy detection. Only the radium can be detected at any significant distance using normal radiation survey instruments. The americium is primarily an alpha emitter and tritium is a low energy beta emitter, both of which require special instruments for reliable detection.

Bill Belanger has already mentioned this site to Walt Graham. Please keep us posted on your actions regarding this site and let me know if we can be of any assistance.

cc: J. Joyner,  
W. Graham, 3HW21

*John Kinneman*